

# **Indiana Department of Environmental Management**

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*(Text does not include verbatim comments)*

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I stood before you a year ago as the new commissioner of IDEM, only days into the job. Today, we are all a year older but it feels like we are much wiser, too. At least I know that I am!

We have all learned yet another lesson about the fragility of our environment and how the actions of a few can impact so many. We have learned that the practices of just one business can impact a 50-mile stretch of the White River.

We have initiated the necessary action to hold this company accountable. But we are doing more than that. Governor O'Bannon's release of fish to the White River this morning was just the first step in restoring that stretch of the river for generations to come. And it was symbolic of our commitment to protect, improve and restore our statewide resources.

The recent contamination of the White River has once again shown us that we must all be vigilant in protecting our environment. One important element of that vigilance must be knowledge. We must all be aware of our situation in order to make informed, rational decisions about our futures and our lives.

On our journey of enhancing our environment, IDEM started three years ago to place yearly markers to chart our progress. It is called the State of the Environment report. It is available today, and I ask you to take a copy and read it. We have written it in such a way as to be understandable and useful to the lay reader and still have information useful for people who spend more time on environmental issues.

Indiana's environment is truly unique, a mixture of agriculture and industry. The steel plants on Lake Michigan represent the largest steel-making region in the Western Hemisphere. But Indiana is also a leader in agricultural production. For example, we lead the nation in the production of ducks and are second in popcorn, tomatoes, and, saving the best for last, ice cream.

The one common thread for steel manufacturers as well as tomato growers is a reliance on the environment. Those great furnaces of industry on the lake need a constant water supply for their steel-making processes and a waterway to bring raw materials to the great hearths. Hoosier farmers need healthy, vital soil in which to grow crops and plenty of clean water.

We have made improvements to our environment, but our work certainly is not done and many challenges lay ahead.

Every week IDEM pioneers new ways to provide more information, furnishing more knowledge to Hoosiers to make them full partners in the effort to make Indiana's environment cleaner and healthier. We all know that knowledge is power and therefore we are constantly looking for ways to improve the dissemination of information. The State of the Environment Report 2000 is one of those ways. It highlights the quality of Indiana's air, land and water. It also provides information about subjects never covered before.

When you receive your copy of the report look for some of the following new items:

- In the section on air look for new information about air toxics, new PM-2.5 data and comparisons of vehicle miles traveled in Indiana.
- In the section on land, look for new information on hazardous waste cleanups, recycling and source reduction rates in Indiana and the new methodology for those calculations.

When you look at the report to get information about water look for the new way we present river basin information. The information will now correspond to our 305(b) report.

- In drinking water information look for a new section about consumer confidence reports that are new this year and provide local utility customers with important information for the first time about the water they drink; information that before was not easily available.

Finally, when you look at the report, look at the section on releases to the environment, the T-R-I data. This information provides not only some continuity with the past but opens new areas of reporting.

- Using chemicals that have been consistently reported since 1991, the total releases in Indiana have dropped dramatically from 167 million pounds to 60 million pounds in 1998. The most dramatic drop was from 1997 to 1998 when the total decreased by 5 million pounds, a decrease of 8 percent, all while Hoosier industrial production increased by 30 percent.
- We introduce, however, a whole new facet to the T-R-I report. Additional industries have been added to the reporting requirements: primarily electrical generating plants. These new industries account for an over-all increase of 75 percent in the total toxic chemical releases reported. Electrical generating plants account for 97 percent of the total increase.

As well as this information that is new to the State of the Environment report, we continue to track other information, that, added to previous years, can give the reader a sense of where we are headed.

Finally, I direct your attention to the section of the State of the Environment Report on waste tires, a problem peculiar to 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century America. In Indiana, we generate about one waste tire per person per year or about 5.5 million waste tires per year. In the past few years, we have cleaned up more than 7.5 million tires of the estimated 18.5 million waste tires in illegal dumps statewide. And just this past February, we began clean up of the largest waste tire pile in Indiana - approximately 4.5 million tires from the Atwood G& M site in Kosciusko county are currently being shredded and removed.

- Indiana's environment is becoming cleaner and healthier, and IDEM's markers of progress in the State of the Environment reports tell Hoosiers about our progress. Tell us what you think of our progress and this year's State of the Environment Report, especially how we can make it better.

Finally, let me thank all of you here. Each of you is an important part of the "environmental community" in Indiana, a community that is committed to the same goal . . . to make Indiana a cleaner and healthier place to live.

Thank You.